

**DEP ADOPTS UPDATED THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST,
REVISES SPECIES LISTINGS BASED ON LATEST SCIENCE
*New Version of Landscape Project Mapping Tool also Released***

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(12/P15) TRENTON - The Department of Environmental Protection this week adopted revisions to its list of threatened and endangered species, upgrading the status of several species such as the bald eagle and the Cooper's hawk to reflect improvements in their populations and adding new species to the list such as the red knot and American kestrel to reflect concerns about declines.

"This update to the state's lists of threatened and endangered species uses the best scientific methods available to provide us with an accurate assessment of the health of our wildlife," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "The success of our threatened and endangered wildlife is an important indicator of the health of our overall environment. We have many positive takeaways from this most recent update to the lists, but we are also reminded that much work still lies ahead of us."

The Department, which this week also released a major update to its Landscape Project species habitat mapping tool, made the species status changes based on a scientific review that considered population levels, trends, threats, and habitat conditions.

The DEP used the Delphi technique, which utilized experts from both within and outside the agency to review data on the populations, distribution and habitat needs of species and to reach consensus on their conservation status.

Key points of the species listing updates include:

- A new category has been added for species of special concern, effectively a watch list for species that warrant special attention due to population declines or vulnerability to habitat disturbances.
- Seven bird species were upgraded for the non-breeding portion of their populations, including the bald eagle, osprey, peregrine falcon, red-shouldered hawk, northern goshawk, short-eared owl, and vesper sparrow.
- The bald eagle's status was upgraded from endangered to threatened for the non-breeding season, reflecting significant population improvements resulting from the discontinuation of DDT and other pesticides, DEP management, habitat protection, improved water quality. The species remains listed as endangered in New Jersey during the breeding season.
- The Cooper's hawk was upgraded from threatened to special concern in the breeding season. This species has recovered from the past use of pesticides, and has reoccupied much of the forested habitats in the state.

- Five species have been added to the endangered list: three birds – the black rail, golden-winged warbler and red knot; the gray petaltail, a species of dragonfly; and the Indiana bat, which is listed as federally endangered.
- Nine species were added to the threatened species category: three birds, American kestrel, cattle egret and horned lark; and six dragonfly species.

The threatened and endangered species lists are important tools in guiding a variety of state, federal and local agencies to make sound decisions on projects and better protect wildlife and their habitats.

The list changes were detailed in a rule proposal published in the New Jersey Register on Jan. 18, 2011. The changes took effect with the formal adoption of the rule on Tuesday.

Endangered species are those whose prospects for survival are in immediate danger due to one or several factors, such as loss or degradation of habitat, exploitation, predation, competition, disease or environmental degradation. A threatened species is one that could become endangered due to its small population size, restricted range and/or specialized habitat needs.

As part of its efforts to continually use the best science in managing the state's resources, the DEP has also released the newest version of its Landscape Project, an interactive ecosystem-based mapping tool that assists government agencies, planners, conservation groups, the public and others in making decisions that will protect wildlife. This tool can be used immediately.

"Version 3.1 of the Landscape Project takes into account the new species' statuses, and implements a new, more precise scientific methodology used previously only in the Highlands region," said David Jenkins, Chief of the DEP's Endangered and Nongame Species Program. "This new version is much more user-friendly and will prove extremely helpful in making sound decisions that will protect imperiled wildlife and their habitats."

For more information on the Landscape Project, visit: www.state.nj.us/dep/fqw/ensp/landscape and the DEP's interactive NJ-GEOWeb website at www.nj.gov/dep/gis/geoweb/splash.htm

For a copy of the adopted threatened and endangered species rule incorporating changes to the lists and for general information on New Jersey's threatened and endangered species, visit: www.nj.gov/dep/fqw/ensp/home.htm

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